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NO. 26  
AUG-SEPT.



REPRINT  
EDITION

# THE VAULT OF HORROR<sup>®</sup>

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE CRYPT-KEEPER





# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! WELCOME ONCE AGAIN TO THE VAULT OF HORROR, MY FIENDS! IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A LONG TIME SINCE WE LAST MET, SO JUST PULL UP A PILE OF SHRUNKEN HEADS AND SIT DOWN! DON'T BE ALARMED ABOUT ALL THE GHOSTS YOU SEE FLOATING NEAR THE CEILING... HERE IN THE VAULT WE LIKE TO KEEP OUR SPIRITS UP! HEH, HEH, HEH! NOW, LET'S BEGIN OUR GHOULISH TALE CALLED...

## TWO OF A KIND!



PIER 30... THE HUGE OCEAN LINER SAT SILENTLY IN THE FOGGY DARKNESS OF THE WATERFRONT, SOLEMNLY OVERLOOKING A GROUP OF NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHERS Huddled IN THE SHADOWS OF THE PIER.

CONFOUND IT! SHE CAN'T STAY ABOARD FOREVER! IT'S TEN P.M. NOW!

WE'VE BEEN WAITING ALL DAY, I GUESS WE CAN WAIT A BIT MORE!





THE NEWSMEN WERE PATIENTLY WAITING FOR WILLOW DREE, THE FAMOUS, CAMERA-SHY STAGE ACTRESS...

STRANGE THAT SHE TURNED DOWN SO MANY HOLLYWOOD OFFERS!

NOT SO STRANGE... THEY USE CAMERAS IN HOLLYWOOD!



AL BOLTON HAD SWORN TO GET A PICTURE OF WILLOW DREE, AND AFTER TRAILING HER FOR DAYS, FINALLY CLICKED THE SHUTTER...



TRIUMPHANTLY, HE HAD RETURNED TO HIS EDITOR, BUT WHEN THE NEGATIVES WERE DEVELOPED...

YOU BRAINLESS IDIOT! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE KIDDING? YOU GOT A PICTURE OF HER SUMMER HOME... BUT THAT'S ALL!



YES, WILLOW DREE WAS POISON TO PHOTOGRAPHERS! TOO MANY OF THEM HAD HAD THEIR CAMERAS SMASHED FOR ATTEMPTING TO TAKE HER PICTURE!

THERE ISN'T A SINGLE PHOTO OF HER IN EXISTENCE! THE GUY THAT DOES GET HER PICTURE IS IN FOR A NICE BONUS!

YEAH! I GUESS AL BOLTON OF THE COURIER CAME CLOSEST! REMEMBER?



YEAH, I REMEMBER! POOR AL WASN'T THE SAME AFTER THAT! HE GAVE UP PHOTOGRAPHY, DIDN'T HE?

SURE DID! SAY, HERE COMES BYRON OF THE NEWS!



ANYTHING NEW ON WHEN WILLOW DREE IS GOING TO LEAVE THE SHIP?

I JUST TALKED TO THE SHIP'S PURSER! SHE'S PUT ONE OVER ON US AGAIN! SHE DEBARKED ABOUT THREE HOURS AGO... CLIMBED DOWN A ROPE LADDER INTO A SMALL BOAT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIP!



THE NEWSMEN HAD 'MISSED THE BOAT' ALL RIGHT! FOR WHILE THEY FUMED AND GROWLED OVER THEIR MISFORTUNE, WILLOW DREE WAS COMFORTABLY RELAXING IN HER PENTHOUSE! THE APARTMENT, THOUGH LUXURIOUS, WAS CONSPICUOUS BY ITS TOTAL ABSENCE OF MIRRORS!





A FEW NIGHTS LATER, SEVERAL MEN CALLED ON WILLOW...

I'VE READ THE PLAY, GENTLEMEN, AND I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT THE LEADING ROLE UNDER MY USUAL TERMS!

OH, NO! YOU MEAN...



EXACTLY! THERE ARE TO BE NO MATINEE PERFORMANCES! ONE SHOW A DAY... AND THAT WILL BE IN THE EVENING!

(SIGH!) AND I GUESS YOU WANT TO REHEARSE ONLY IN THE EVENING, AS USUAL?



YES! OTHERWISE, I WILL NOT TAKE THE ROLE! IS IT AGREED?

(SIGH!) AGREED!



THAT, AND HER RELUCTANCE TO BE PUBLICIZED, WAS WHY COLUMNISTS AND SHOW PEOPLE CALLED HER TEMPERMENTAL! SOME EVENINGS LATER SHE WAS INTRODUCED TO HER CO-STAR, BRADBURY PHILLIPS...

I'VE BEEN WANTING TO MEET YOU FOR A GREAT MANY YEARS, MISS DREE!

PLEASE CALL ME 'WILLOW'! I'M HAPPY TO MEET YOU TOO... BRAD! I THINK WE'LL BE GOOD FRIENDS!



IN THE WEEKS OF REHEARSALS THAT FOLLOWED, BRAD AND WILLOW BECAME MORE THAN GOOD FRIENDS.

I'VE NEVER PLAYED OPPOSITE A LOVELIER WOMAN THAN YOU, WILLOW! WILL YOU HAVE DINNER WITH ME TONIGHT?

OH, BRAD, I'D LOVE TO... BUT AT MY APARTMENT!



WHEN THEY BEGAN SEEING EACH OTHER STEADILY, THE THEATRE AND NEWSPAPER WORLDS WERE HOPEFUL THAT AT LAST PERHAPS THERE WOULD BE A CHANGE IN HER...

...MAYBE SHE'LL BREAK DOWN AND LET HER PICTURE BE TAKEN!

IF THEY GET MARRIED, MAYBE SHE'LL BE A LITTLE MORE COOPERATIVE!



WILLOW, THE SHOW'S ALL SET TO OPEN NEXT WEEK, AND WE'VE BEEN WORKING HARD! LET'S TAKE THE WEEKEND OFF AND GO SOMEWHERE TOGETHER!

OH, BRAD! HOW WONDERFUL! I'VE BEEN DYING TO TAKE A REST!





I KNOW A GOOD WINTER RESORT JUST A FEW HOURS DRIVE FROM HERE! I CAN PICK YOU UP TOMORROW MORNING, AND...



NO, BRAD! PICK ME UP TOMORROW NIGHT! YOU FORGET I'M A NIGHT OWL WHO LIKES TO SLEEP ALL DAY!

OKAY, BEAUTIFUL! ANYTHING YOU SAY! I'VE BEEN WANTING TO BE ALONE WITH YOU, AWAY FROM PEOPLE, FOR A LONG TIME!

OH, BRAD...



HEH, HEH! SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF GOOEY MUSH, EH? WELL, DON'T BE IMPATIENT! THE GOOD PART IS JUST BEGINNING! EVERYONE THINKS POOR WILLOW IS *TEMPERMENTAL*... BUT YOU AND I KNOW THE REASON WHY SHE REFUSES TO HAVE HER PICTURE TAKEN, HATES MIRRORS, AND *SLEEPS* ALL DAY! YEP! *WILLOW IS A VAMPIRE!*



THAT'S WHY SHE SO READILY ACCEPTED BRAD'S IDEA OF THE WEEKEND VACATION! EVEN THOUGH SHE LIKES HIM VERY MUCH, SHE WANTS TO GET HIM ALONE SO SHE CAN *FEAST*! HEH! HEH! BUT THAT'S ONLY HALF OF IT! YOU SEE, BRAD SUGGESTED THE IDEA FOR THE *VERY SAME REASON!* ONLY HE'S NOT A *VAMPIRE!* HEH! HE'S A *SHOUL!* HEH, HEH, HEH!



WELL, THE NEXT NIGHT, THE TWO FIENDS WERE AT THE SKI LODGE...

LOOK AT THAT MOON! ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?

YES! IT... IT DOES SOMETHING TO YOU, DOESN'T IT?



YES... IT DOES! SAY! THERE'S A SMALL CABIN AROUND THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN, UP NEAR THE TOP! IT'S QUITE A HIKE, BUT ONCE WE GET THERE, WE'D BE... COMPLETELY ALONE!



... I'D LIKE THAT...

A SHORT TIME LATER, TWO FIGURES SET OUT FROM THE SKI LODGE AND SLOWLY TRUDGED THROUGH THE DEEP, MOONLIT SNOW UP AND AROUND THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN...





IT WAS NO EASY JOURNEY! THEY PLODGED ON, STEP AFTER STEP... AND BRAD FOUND HIS THOUGHTS OF WILLOW GIVING HIM TROUBLE...

AND WILLOW? SHE WAS HAVING DIFFICULTIES WITH HER HEART, JUST AS BRAD WAS...

AND THEN, SUDDENLY, WITHOUT ANY WARNING, A RAGING, BLINDING SNOWSTORM SWOOPED DOWN ON THEM...

I'M A HEEL TO WANT TO KILL HER! I COULD HAVE PICKED ANOTHER VICTIM! SHE'S SUCH A SWELL GIRL! I... I LIKE HER SO MUCH!

HE'S BEEN SO WONDERFUL! I DON'T KNOW WHATEVER MADE ME THINK I WANTED TO KILL HIM! I... I THINK I'M FALLING IN LOVE WITH HIM!

WILLOW! HOLD MY HAND TIGHTLY! WE'VE GOT TO KEEP CLOSE TOGETHER!

BRAD! I'M FRIGHTENED!

FOR SEVERAL HOURS THEY STRUGGLED THROUGH THE BLIZZARD, STUMBLING AND FALLING AGAIN AND AGAIN IN THE DEEP BANKS OF SNOW... TRYING DESPERATELY TO REACH THE CABIN AND SAFETY...

ANOTHER HALF HOUR PASSED BEFORE THEY FINALLY ENTERED THE CABIN AND THREW THEMSELVES ON THE BUNKS... EXHAUSTED! IT WAS ALMOST DAWN...

(GASP!) THERE, WILLOW! THERE'S THE CABIN! I CAN... (GASP!) I CAN SEE IT!



THEY SLEPT SOUNDLY UNTIL EARLY EVENING! WILLOW AWOKE TO FIND BRAD BENDING OVER HER, AN ANXIOUS EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE...

BRAD! OH... FOR A MOMENT YOU STARTLED ME!

I... I COULDN'T HEAR YOU BREATHING! YOU... YOU LOOKED DEAD! BUT I CAN SEE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT! I... I WAS SO WORRIED...

BRAD...

DARLING...



BRAD... THE STORM!  
HAS IT STOPPED YET?

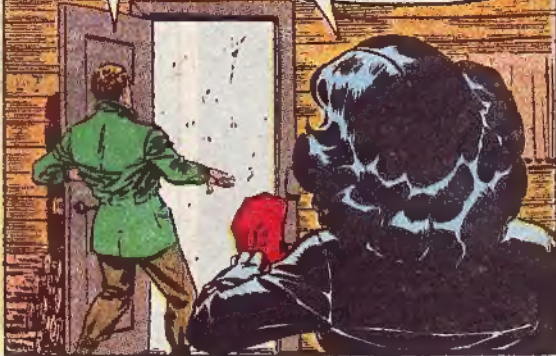
I DON'T THINK SO, WILLOW!  
DOESN'T SOUND LIKE IT!  
I'LL OPEN THE DOOR AND...



BRAD YANKED OPEN THE CABIN DOOR! A WALL OF  
WHITE, REACHING HIGHER THAN THE CEILING, MET HIS  
EYES...

GOOD LORD!

BRAD! WE'RE  
SNOWBOUND!



THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT  
WAIT... AND HOPE THAT SOMEONE  
WOULD REALIZE WHERE THEY  
WERE AND FORM A RESCUE PARTY...

YOU SLEEP HERE, WILLOW!  
IT'S WARMER! I'LL SLEEP  
IN THE NEXT ROOM!

ALL  
RIGHT,  
BRAD!



THE NIGHTS PASSED...

LORD, I'M HUNGRY! I'M GETTING  
STOMACH CRAMPS! BUT I WON'T  
TOUCH WILLOW! I'D DIE, RATHER  
THAN HARM HER!



... AND ANOTHER NIGHT PASSED...

I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR  
SOMEONE'S BLOOD RIGHT NOW!  
MY BODY GRAVES IT SO MUCH!  
IF ONLY SOMEONE ELSE WERE  
WITH ME INSTEAD OF BRAD!  
I'LL NEVER HURT HIM!



... AND ANOTHER NIGHT...

I CAN'T STAND IT  
ANYMORE! IF ONLY IT  
WOULD STOP  
SNOWING!



THEY'VE GOT TO RESCUE US SOON! I... I CAN'T  
GO ON LIKE THIS! (PANT!) WHY... WHY DON'T  
THEY COME DIG US OUT?





BUT THE FOLLOWING EVENING...

BRAD... I'M... I'M TOO WEAK TO STAND! I... WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED... YOUR ARM?

I HAD A LITTLE ACCIDENT! FELL DOWN! JUST... JUST A SPRAIN! DON'T WORRY, HONEY!



BUT YOU, WILLOW! YOU LOOK SO PALE! YOU'D BETTER STAY IN BED!

YOU... YOU'RE RIGHT! I DO FEEL WEAK! PERHAPS I SHOULD BE IN BED!



I'LL BE IN THE NEXT ROOM, KITTEN! JUST CALL IF YOU WANT ME! I... I LOVE YOU, WILLOW...

LOVE... YOU, BRAD!



BRAD RETURNED TO HIS ROOM AND SLUMPED ON THE EDGE OF HIS BED, TRYING DESPERATELY TO SUPPRESS THE OVERWHELMING URGE THAT WAS CONSUMING HIM!



THE NEXT NIGHT BRAD AWOKED FROM HIS SLEEP AND HURRIED TO WILLOW'S SIDE...

WILLOW... WILLOW, ARE YOU AWAKE?



WILLOW STARED WEAKLY UP AT HIM...

BRAD... YOU... (GASP!) YOU'RE HURT! GOOD LORD, WHAT... (GASP!) WHAT HAPPENED?



BRAD LOOKED AWAY, TRYING TO AVOID HER QUESTIONING EYES...

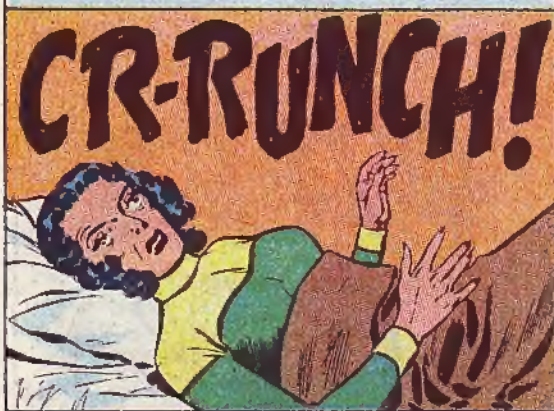
OH... ER... NOTHING, HONEY! DON'T WORRY! IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO MAKE YOU COMFORTABLE?

N-NO, BRAD! I'LL... BE ALL RIGHT!





A WEEK PASSED! WILLOW REMAINED IN HER BED, GROWING STEADILY PALER AND WEAKER! THEN, THE TONS OF SNOW LYING ON THE ROOF PROVED TOO MUCH OF A STRAIN ON THE SMALL CABIN'S STRUCTURE...



WITH AN EAR SPLITTING CRACK, THE ROOF SPLINTERED AND COLLAPSED DIRECTLY ABOVE WILLOW! A HUGE, STAKE-LIKE FRAGMENT HURTLIED DOWN...



HEARING THE THUNDEROUS ROAR AND WILLOW'S PETRIFIED SCREAM OF AGONY FROM THE NEXT ROOM, BRAD LUNGED FROM HIS BED AND DRAGGED HIMSELF TO HER BEDSIDE...



SEVERAL DAYS LATER, A RESCUE PARTY ARRIVED AND REMOVED THE DRIFTS OF SNOW FROM THE DOOR! THEY STEPPED INSIDE...



THE RESCUERS STARED IN HORRIFIED FASCINATION AT THE GRUESOME SIGHT THEIR EYES BEHELD! THE WOMAN LAY IN HER BED, A WOODEN STAKE PROTRUDING UPRIGHT FROM HER CHEST, HER FLESH AS DEATHLY WHITE AS THE SNOW SURROUNDING HER. THE MAN, OR WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM, WAS SPRAWLED GROTESQUELY ON THE FLOOR, HIS HAND GRASPING HERS IN A DEATH-GRIP! FOR IN ORDER TO *SPARE* EACH OTHER, WILLOW HAD DRAINED HER OWN BLOOD... AND BRAD HAD EATEN MOST OF HIS OWN FLESH...



HEH, HEH! WASN'T THAT A PATHETIC LOVE AFFAIR? WILLOW WAS A *SUCKER* FOR BRAD... AND BRAD ATE HIMSELF UP ALIVE OVER WILLOW! A REALLY *SELF-SACRIFICING* COUPLE, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? YOU KNOW THAT OLD EXPRESSION... 'THE CORPSE OF TRUE LOVE'...! HEH, HEH! WELL, NOW IT'S TIME TO GO ON TO THAT SICKENING *CRYPT-KEEPER!* DON'T BE TOO BORED... I'LL SEE YOU LATER IN THE BOOK!





# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

THANK YOU, V.K., FOR EIGHT PAGES OF SHEER... STARK... NOTHING! IF THAT'S A HORROR STORY, I'LL EAT MY COFFIN! WHY, I'LL BET YOU COULDN'T MAKE A NUDE NATIVE OF NEW GUINEA SHIVER AT THE NORTH POLE WITH THAT YARN! HEH, HEH! YEP! IT'S ME, FIENDS! THE CRYPT-KEEPER... READY TO REALLY COME ACROSS WITH THE CURDLES! SO CREEP INTO THE CRYPT, GRAB YOUR GHOUL, AN' LET'S DANCE! DON'T MATTER IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT! I'LL KEEP YOU HOPPIN' WITH THE TERROR-TALE I CALL...

## GRAFT IN CONCRETE!



GODFREY HORNSBY, PRESIDENT OF THE HORNSBY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY AND MEMBER OF THE TOWN COUNCIL, PUFFED NERVOUSLY ON HIS CIGAR AS HE PACED THE FLOOR OF THE LIBRARY IN MAYOR JOHN APPLIGATE'S LUXURIOUS MANSION! FINALLY THE DOOR OF THE LIBRARY OPENED AND THE MAYOR APPEARED...

WELL, HORNSBY! I'M SORRY I KEPT YOU WAITING, BUT I'M GIVING A DINNER PARTY! WHAT CAN BE SO IMPORTANT THAT WOULDN'T WAIT FOR THE COUNCIL MEETING TOMORROW MORNING?

I'LL BE AS BRIEF AS I CAN, MAYOR APPLIGATE! IT'S ABOUT TOMORROW'S MEETING THAT I'VE COME...









YOU MEAN THE ROAD CONTRACT. DON'T YOU, HORNSBY?

EXACTLY, MAYOR! I WANT THAT CONTRACT!




IT'S NOT UP TO ME, HORNSBY! THE VOTE OF THE COUNCIL WILL DECIDE WHO GETS THE JOB!

YOU CAN SWING IT IF YOU WANT TO, MAYOR!




I MIGHT! BUT I'M NOT GOING TO! I KNOW YOUR PLAN! YOU WANT THE ROAD TO RUN THROUGH THAT PARCEL OF LAND YOU OWN SOUTH OF TOWN!

AND I WANT MY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY TO GET THE CONTRACT, TOO!




I'M SORRY, HORNSBY! I WILL NOT BE A PART OF ANY DIRTY DEALS INVOLVING THE TOWN'S MONEY!

I THINK YOU WILL, MAYOR! AFTER ALL! THIS IS NOTHING NEW TO YOU!



YOU'D BETTER EXPLAIN YOURSELF, HORNSBY! I DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE INFERRING!

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE NEW SCHOOL THEY'RE PUTTING UP, APPLEGATE! I KNOW ALL ABOUT THE KICKBACK YOU'RE GETTING ON THE PRICE THE TOWN PAID FOR THE LAND!



WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, HORNSBY!

I'M TALKING ABOUT THIS AGREEMENT! HERE'S A PHOTOSTATIC COPY! LOOK FAMILIAR, MAYOR? WHAT IF THE REST OF THE COUNCIL SAW THIS?

THIS... THIS IS BLACK-MAIL, HORNSBY!

COME NOW, MAYOR APPLEGATE! LET'S JUST SAY THAT WE'VE COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING! TOMORROW, AT THE COUNCIL MEETING, YOU'LL SEE THAT I GET THE ROAD CONTRACT... AND OVER MY PROPOSED ROUTE... EH?



HEH, HEH! WELL, KIDDIES! IT'S JUST LIKE THEY SAY! 'ALL'S FAIR ...IN LOVE AND POLITICS!' SO GODFREY HORNSBY LAID HIS CARDS ON THE TABLE AND MAYOR APPLEGATE COULDN'T TOP 'EM! THE NEXT DAY, AT THE COUNCIL MEETING ...



NOW, JUST ONE MINUTE, MAYOR APPLEGATE! IF, AS YOU SAY, WE DO GRANT THIS CONTRACT TO OUR FELLOW COUNCIL MEMBER, MR. HORNSBY, AM I TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE ROAD WILL THEN FOLLOW HIS PROPOSED ROUTE?



THE CONTRACT WOULD MEAN THAT, MR. WILLIAMS!

BUT ISN'T IT RATHER OBVIOUS THAT THE ROUTE IS LAID OUT SO AS TO INCLUDE HIS OWN PROPERTY HOLDINGS?



MR. WILLIAMS! I SEEM TO RECALL A SIMILAR SITUATION LAST YEAR...WHEN THE COUNCIL WAS VOTING ON A NEW PLAYGROUND FOR THE PARK...

LOOK HERE, MAYOR APPLEGATE! I DON'T SEE NOW THAT HAS ANY BEARING ON THE PRESENT CASE!



PERHAPS THE REST OF THE COUNCIL WOULD LIKE TO HEAR WHERE THE EQUIPMENT FOR THE PLAYGROUND GAME FROM, MR. WILLIAMS?

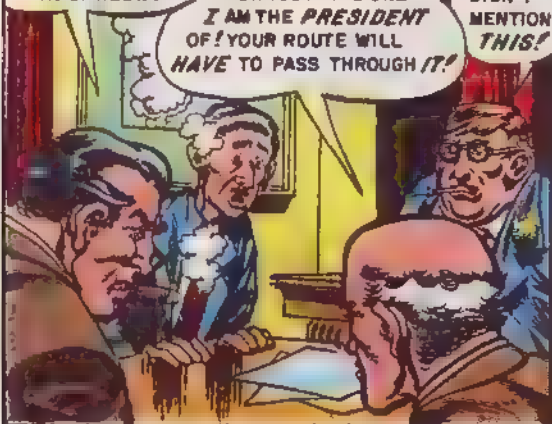
AHEM...COUGH! I... ER... SEE NOW THAT THE ROUTE IS THE BEST... AND THAT IT IS ONLY BY SHEER COINCIDENCE THAT IT PASSES MR. HORNSBY'S PROPERTY! I'LL CAST MY VOTE...AYE!



THANK YOU, MR. WILLIAMS! ANY OTHER OBJECTIONS?

WHAT ABOUT THE GEMETERY, HORNSBY? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT THAT?

GEMETERY? GEMETERY? WHAT GEMETERY, MR. BARLOW?



WHY CRAGMOOR GEMETERY, MR. HORNSBY! THE ONE I AM THE PRESIDENT OF! YOUR ROUTE WILL HAVE TO PASS THROUGH IT!

HORNSBY! YOU DIDN'T MENTION THIS!

MY ROUTE DOESN'T PASS THROUGH CRAGMOOR, MR. BARLOW!



IT DOES NOW, HORNSBY! HEH, HEH! THAT IS... IF YOU WANT ME TO VOTE 'AYE'!

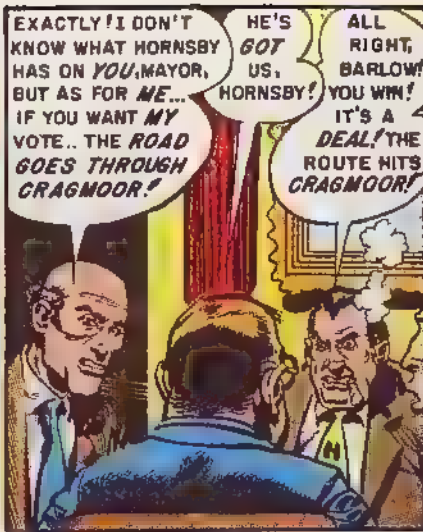
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BODIES, BARLOW?





WE'LL MOVE THEM, MAYOR APPLAGATE!

THIS IS A HOLD-UP, BARLOW!



EXACTLY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT HORNSBY HAS ON YOU, MAYOR, BUT AS FOR ME... IF YOU WANT MY VOTE... THE ROAD GOES THROUGH CRAGMOOR!

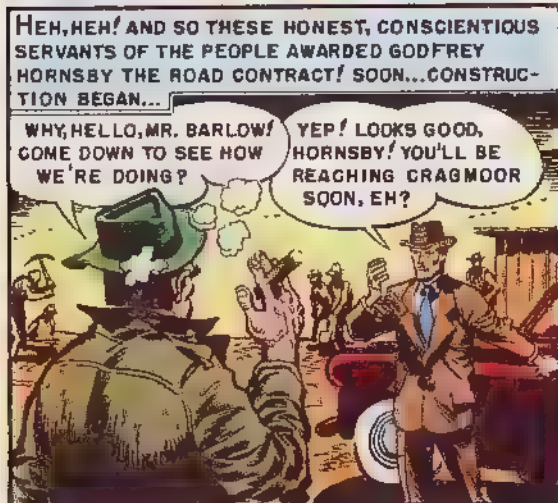
HE'S GOT US, HORNSBY!

ALL RIGHT, BARLOW! YOU WIN! IT'S A DEAL! THE ROUTE HITS CRAGMOOR!



ALL IN FAVOR OF ACCEPTING HORNSBY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY'S BID FOR THE PROPOSED TOWN ROAD, SIGNIFY BY SAYING 'AYE'!

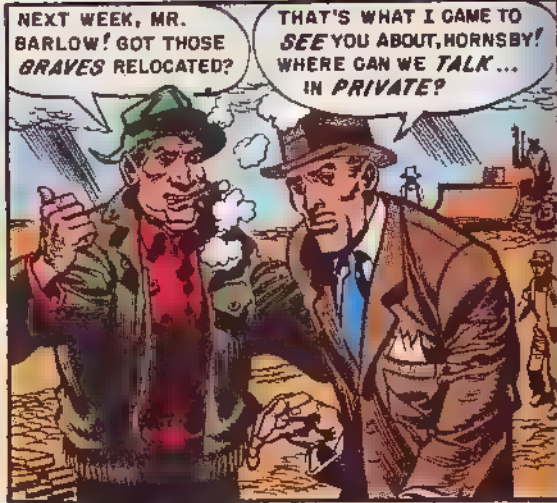
AYE!  
AYE!  
AYE!



HEH, HEH! AND SO THESE HONEST, CONSCIENTIOUS SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE AWARDED GODFREY HORNSBY THE ROAD CONTRACT! SOON... CONSTRUCTION BEGAN...

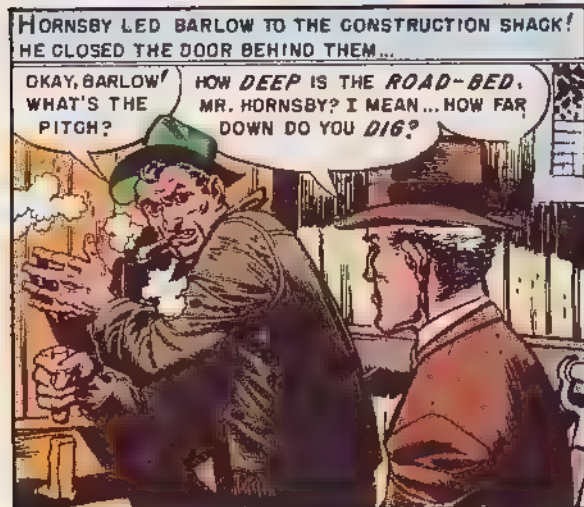
WHY, HELLO, MR. BARLOW! COME DOWN TO SEE HOW WE'RE DOING?

YEP! LOOKS GOOD, HORNSBY! YOU'LL BE REACHING CRAGMOOR SOON, EH?



NEXT WEEK, MR. BARLOW! GOT THOSE GRAVES RELOCATED?

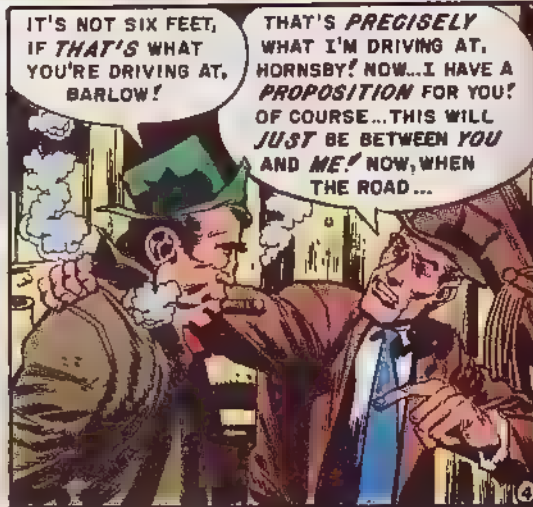
THAT'S WHAT I CAME TO SEE YOU ABOUT, HORNSBY! WHERE CAN WE TALK ... IN PRIVATE?



HORNSBY LED BARLOW TO THE CONSTRUCTION SHACK! HE CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND THEM...

OKAY, BARLOW! WHAT'S THE PITCH?

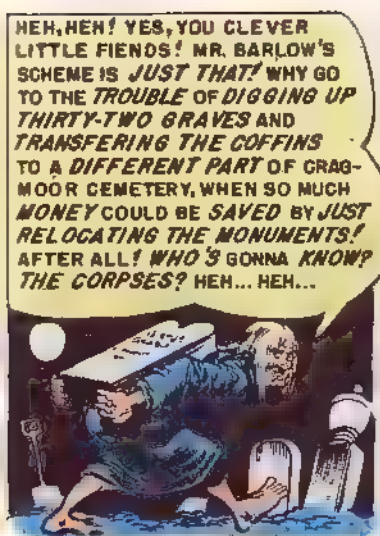
HOW DEEP IS THE ROAD-BED, MR. HORNSBY? I MEAN... HOW FAR DOWN DO YOU DIG?



IT'S NOT SIX FEET, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE DRIVING AT, BARLOW!

THAT'S *PRECISELY* WHAT I'M DRIVING AT, HORNSBY! NOW... I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU! OF COURSE... THIS WILL JUST BE BETWEEN YOU AND ME! NOW, WHEN THE ROAD...





HEH, HEH! YES, YOU CLEVER LITTLE FIENDS! MR. BARLOW'S SCHEME IS *JUST THAT!* WHY GO TO THE TROUBLE OF DIGGING UP THIRTY-TWO GRAVES AND TRANSFERRING THE COFFINS TO A DIFFERENT PART OF GRAGMOOR CEMETERY, WHEN SO MUCH MONEY COULD BE SAVED BY JUST RELOCATING THE MONUMENTS! AFTER ALL! WHO'S GONNA KNOW? THE CORPSES? HEH... HEH...



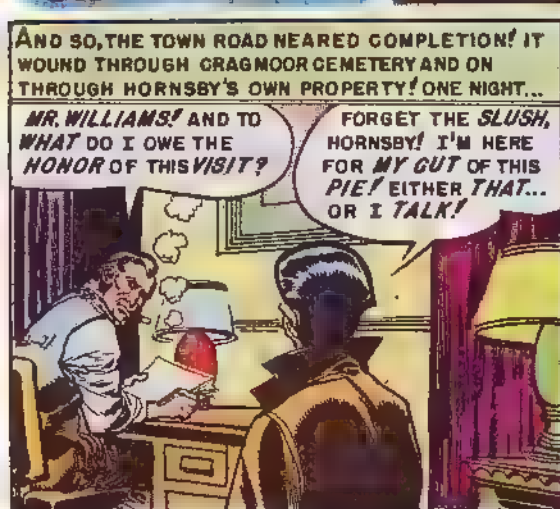
ALL RIGHT, BARLOW! THAT'S A DEAL! BUT YOU'D BETTER MAKE THAT FIVE HUNDRED!

FIVE HUNDRED IS PRETTY STEEP, HORNSBY!



ONE OF MY BULL-DOZERS COULD SLIP... BARLOW!

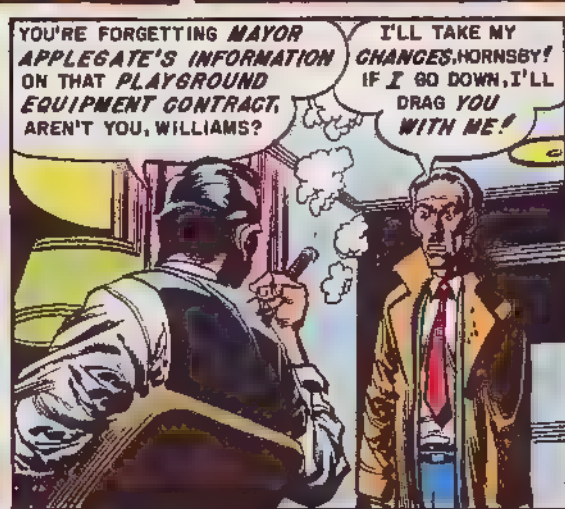
OKAY! OKAY! FIVE HUNDRED!



AND SO, THE TOWN ROAD NEARED COMPLETION! IT WOULD THROUGH GRAGMOOR CEMETERY AND ON THROUGH HORNSBY'S OWN PROPERTY! ONE NIGHT...

MR. WILLIAMS! AND TO WHAT DO I OWE THE HONOR OF THIS VISIT?

FORGET THE SLUSH, HORNSBY! I'M HERE FOR MY GUT OF THIS PIE! EITHER THAT... OR I TALK!



YOU'RE FORGETTING MAYOR APPLEGATE'S INFORMATION ON THAT PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT CONTRACT, AREN'T YOU, WILLIAMS?

I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES, HORNSBY! IF I GO DOWN, I'LL DRAG YOU WITH ME!



SO THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL, EH?

THAT'S HOW I FEEL, HORNSBY! SHALL WE MAKE IT... SAY... TWO THOUSAND?



ALL RIGHT, WILLIAMS! TWO THOUSAND! BUT NOT ONE CENT MORE!

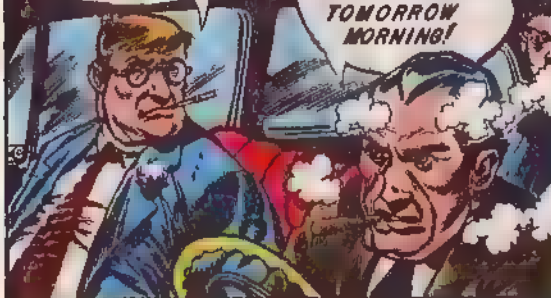
I KNEW WE'D SEE THINGS EYE TO EYE, MR. HORNSBY! HERE'S MY PEN...



ONE NIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST, A BLACK LIMOUSINE PURRLED ALONG THE RECENTLY COMPLETED NEW TOWN ROAD...

YOU'LL CLEAR THIS EQUIPMENT AWAY BEFORE I CUT THE TAPE TOMORROW... EH, HORNSBY?

DON'T YOU WORRY, MAYOR APPLEGATE! THAT STEAM ROLLER IS GOING TO BE PICKED UP FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING!



GODFREY HORNSBY SAT BEHIND THE WHEEL! MAYOR APPLEGATE WAS AT HIS SIDE! MR. WILLIAMS AND MR. BARLOW LOUNGED IN THE COMFORTABLE REAR SEAT...

CERTAINLY IS A SMOOTH ROAD, MR. HORNSBY!

THIS IS THE PART THAT RUNS THROUGH DRAGMOOR, MR. BARLOW! I WAS ESPECIALLY CAREFUL ABOUT THIS AREA...HEH, HEH!



SUDDENLY THE CAR'S HEADLIGHTS FELL UPON SOMETHING IN THE ROAD AHEAD...

GOOD LORD!

LOOK OUT, HORNSBY!



IT STUCK UP OUT OF THE NEW BLACK TAR, CLAWING AT THE HOT NIGHT AIR... A ROTTED, MOULDY, MAGGOT-COVERED HAND...



THE BLACK LIMOUSINE SWERVED CRAZILY TO AVOID HITTING THE SLIMY THING... CAREENED ACROSS THE ROAD...AND...



FOR A MOMENT AFTER THE SPLINTERING CRASH, THERE WAS THICK SILENCE! THEN...

HORNSBY! HORNSBY! YOU ALL RIGHT?

BARLOW! DID YOU SEE IT? DID YOU SEE THAT... OHKE...

WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED?

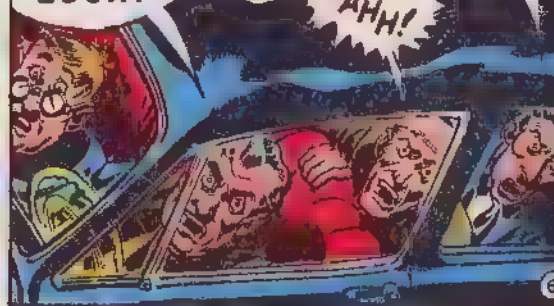


SUDDENLY, THE AUGUST NIGHT WAS FILLED WITH A RUMBLING! THE ROAD BEGAN TO CRACK AND CRUMBLE

BARLOW! THIS IS WHERE THE GRAVES ARE! LOOK!

SHUT UP, YOU FOOL! I...I... YAAAAA

OH... LORD!

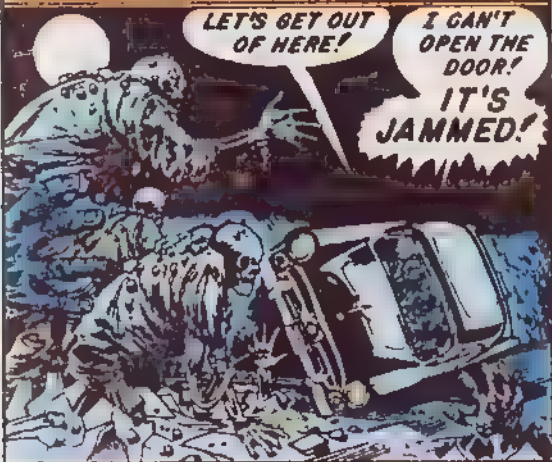




SLOWLY, THEY BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM BENEATH THE NEWLY COMPLETED HIGHWAY! THEY TOTTERED AND STUMBLER, MOVING AWKWARDLY...

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

I CAN'T OPEN THE DOOR!  
IT'S JAMMED!



THE PUTRID ODOR OF THIRTY-TWO DECAYING CORPSES BURNED THE TRAPPED COUNCILMEN'S NOSTRILS ...

OH, LORD!  
HELP US!

WE'RE TRAPPED!  
AND THEY'RE COMING...

EEEEAAAA!

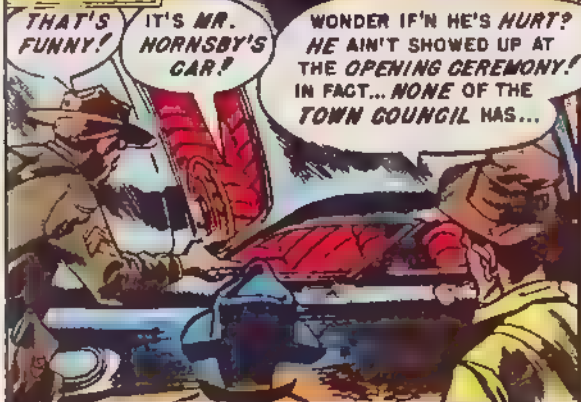


THE NEXT MORNING, THE WRECKED LIMOUSINE WAS DISCOVERED AT THE ROADSIDE! BUT THERE WAS NO ONE INSIDE...

THAT'S FUNNY!

IT'S MR. HORNSBY'S CAR!

WONDER IF HE'S HURT?  
HE AIN'T SHOWED UP AT THE OPENING CEREMONY!  
IN FACT... NONE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL HAS...

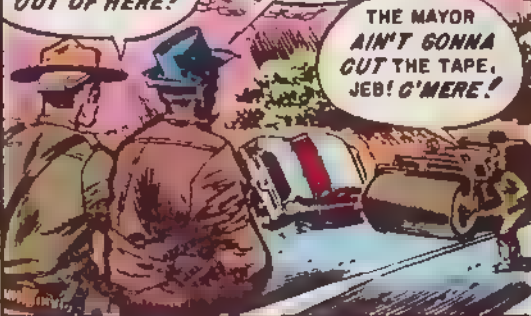


THE ROAD AROUND THE CAR WAS SMOOTHLY PAVED! NEARBY, THE STEAMROLLER RESTED...

WELL! LET'S GET THAT STEAM ROLLER... AND THIS WRECK OUT OF HERE!

YEAH! THE TOWNSFOLK'LL BE DRIVIN' THROUGH... SOON AS THE MAYOR CUTS THE TAPE!

THE MAYOR AIN'T GONNA CUT THE TAPE, JEB! O'MERE!



NO! THE MAYOR WON'T CUT ANY TAPE! NOR WILL THE REST OF THE COUNCIL BE PRESENT AT THE ROAD'S OPENING CEREMONY! FOR MAYOR APPLEGATE, MR. BARLOW, MR. WILLIAMS, AND MR. HORNSBY HAVE BEEN FLATTENED BY THE STEAMROLLER AND NEATLY INSET INTO THE ROAD'S FRESH NEW PAVEMENT...

GULP!

CHOKES!

GOOD LORD!



HEH, HEH! WELL, THE OCCUPANTS OF GRAMMOOR'S VIOLATED GRAVES CERTAINLY TOOK SOME CONCRETE STEPS TOWARD REVENGE, EH, KIDDIES? I HOPE THE END TO MY LITTLE TERROR-TALE DIDN'T FALL FLAT! AS FOR THOSE FOUR COUNCILMEN... WELL, I WOULDN'T FEEL SORRY FOR THEM IF I WERE YOU! AFTER ALL, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THEY'VE BEEN ON THE LEVEL IN YEARS! NOW, I'LL RETURN YOU TO THE VAULT-KEEPER! 'BYE! PLEASANT... SCREAMS?







# JOKER!

The crowd was hushed and apprehensive as Jacques Carigot climbed the steps to the Guillotine. The mob gathered on the cobblestones below leaned breathlessly forward, as if at a signal; slowly the condemned man turned and grinned down at them. Slowly he winked, as if at an uproarious jest.

"Even at his own execution," a fat man in a leather apron wheezed to his neighbor, "he is able to smile and maintain his reputation as Jacques the Joker!"

"He is laughing at Paris . . . at US!" his tall companion rasped. "These fools come to admire his brazen courage, completely ignoring the fact that 20 innocent people have died at his hands! The sooner the Guillotine blade cuts off his devilish head, the safer we'll all be!"

"He's a devil, all right!" the fat man agreed grudgingly. "But, such wit! Imagine . . . an original and highly humorous verse pinned to each of his victims! He may be the deadliest killer to ever walk the streets of France, but who can deny that he deserves to be called the JOKER?"

The Chief Jailer stood slightly below the platform, his eyes never leaving the face of the man who was about to die. What kind of depraved maniac can he be? he thought to himself. Life . . . death . . . everything is a source of mirth to him! Even his last request was totally different from those I usually receive the eve of execution! A fine feast . . . a visit from a

close friend . . . *THOSE* are invariably the last desire. But not for Monsieur Carigot . . . *HE* asks for a bottle of purple ink and a pen! But I knew too much about his penchant for ironic humor not to see through his stunt. He poisons himself by swallowing the ink . . . or stabs himself with the pen . . . and the Guillotine is cheated. And he has made his last and most sensational joke!

Despite the revulsion he felt over the man's ghoulish deeds, the Chief Jailer marveled at the eerie smile tugging at the corners of Carigot's mouth. Even now he is probably waiting for the poison to take effect, the jailer thought. But his last joke will never be staged, because I had enough presence of mind to substitute a harmless vegetable dye for the ink . . . and a rubber-nibbed point for the pen he wanted!

The high scarf which the prisoner wore tightly wrapped around his throat deeply angered the Executioner. Even at this moment, the officer thought, this jester thinks perhaps he will escape by hiding inside the scarf some hard object which will blunt the blade when it falls. A last big joke, he hopes!

The Executioner forced Carigot to his knees, placed the man's head in the hollowed-out place directly below the poised blade far overhead. Then, suddenly, the officer yanked the scarf loose, exposing Monsieur Carigot's bare throat. Nothing clattered to the platform, to the Executioner's dismay. His eyes widened and he stared in disbelief at his victim's neck. A succession of crude dashes completely circled the condemned man's throat. And, below the line of purple dots, were the carefully lettered words: PLEASE CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE! THANK YOU . . . THE JOKER!



THIS STORY DOESN'T QUITE  
MAKE IT! IT'S ONLY...

# HALF-WAY HORRIBLE!



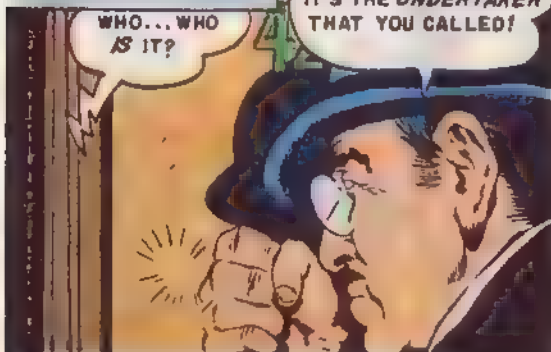
YOUR NAME IS **ZACHARY BOXER!** YOU'RE AN **UNDERTAKER!** YOU'RE STANDING BEFORE THE APARTMENT DOOR CHECKING ITS NUMBER WITH THE PHONE CALL REQUEST YOU'D RECEIVED HALF AN HOUR AGO! THE VOICE ON THE OTHER END HAD SOUNDED SHAKY... TEARFUL! YOU'D KNOWN THAT IT'D MEANT ONLY ONE THING! **BUSINESS!** NOW YOU'RE KNOCKING...AND THE SAME VOICE IS ASKING...

OH, YES! COME IN! QUICKLY!  
BUT... **DON'T TURN  
ON THE LIGHT!**

I... I... YES, SIR!

WHO... WHO  
IS IT?

IT'S THE **UNDERTAKER**  
THAT YOU CALLED!





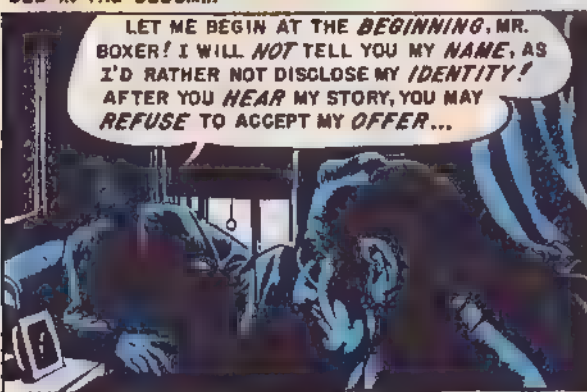
YOU SWING OPEN THE DOOR! THE LIGHT FROM THE HALLWAY KNIFES INTO THE PITCH-BLACK APARTMENT! YOU STEP INSIDE...HESITANTLY! A HEAVY ODOR OF INCENSE HANGS IN THE AIR...



I'M SORRY! I...I CAN'T SEE YOU!

I DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE ME! LISTEN TO MY STORY! THEN...IF YOU STILL WANT THE JOB...

THE SWEET, PUNGENT INCENSE ODOR *SICKENS* YOU! BUT NOW YOUR EYES ARE BECOMING ACCUSTOMED TO THE DARKNESS, ZACHARY BOXER! YOU CAN MAKE OUT THE FORM OF THE OWNER OF THE VOICE... LYING ON A DAY-BED IN THE GLOOM...



LET ME BEGIN AT THE *BEGINNING*, MR. BOXER! I WILL *NOT* TELL YOU MY NAME, AS I'D RATHER NOT DISCLOSE MY *IDENTITY*! AFTER YOU *HEAR* MY STORY, YOU MAY *REFUSE* TO ACCEPT MY *OFFER*...

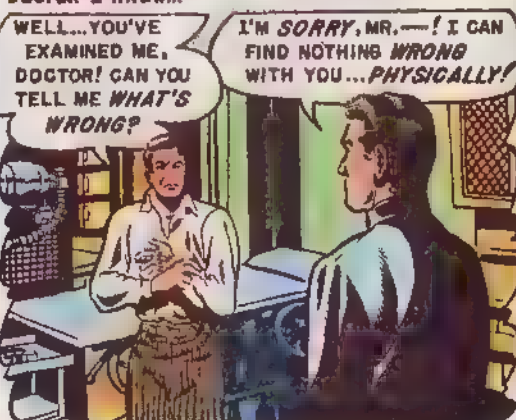
THE LIGHT BEAMING IN FROM THE HALL ILLUMINATES A CHAIR! YOU SHUT THE DOOR...AND AS THE DARKNESS CLOSES IN, YOU STUMBLE TOWARD IT! YOU SIT DOWN AS THE NERVOUS VOICE CONTINUES...



I KNOW THIS IS OUT OF THE *ORDINARY*...BUT SO IS MY *NEED* FOR YOU! WILL YOU *BEAR* WITH ME?

PLEASE TELL ME WHAT YOU *WANT*, SIR! I'M VERY *BUSY* THESE DAYS!

'IT BEGAN OVER TWO YEARS AGO! I'D BEEN HAVING HEADACHES...INDIGESTION...PERIODS OF ELATION AND DEPRESSION! I'D GONE TO SEE A DOCTOR I KNEW...



WELL...YOU'VE EXAMINED ME, DOCTOR! CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S *WRONG*?

I'M *SORRY*, MR.—! I CAN FIND NOTHING *WRONG* WITH YOU...*PHYSICALLY*!

YOU EMPHASIZE THE WORD *PHYSICAL*, DOCTOR! DO YOU INFER...?

THERE ARE MANY *DIS-TURBANCES* THAT ARE NOT *PHYSICAL* IN NATURE,

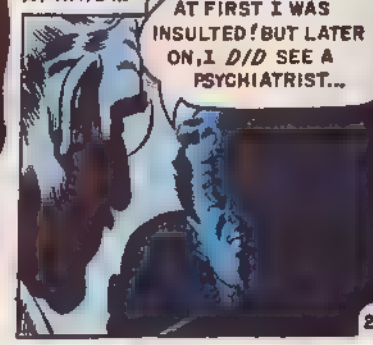
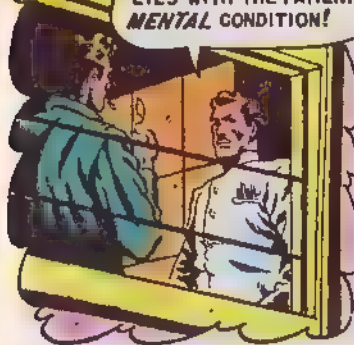
MR.—! THEIR CAUSE LIES WITH THE PATIENT'S *MENTAL* CONDITION!

ARE YOU *SUGGESTING* THAT I'M...

I *SUGGEST*, MR.—, THAT YOU VISIT A *COMPETENT PSYCHIATRIST*! HE MAY BE ABLE TO *HELP* YOU!

YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE NOW, ZACHARY, AREN'T YOU? THE STRANGER LYING IN THE DARKNESS IS ADMITTING SOME *FRIGHTENING FACTS* ABOUT HIMSELF! YOU'D LIKE TO GET UP AND *LEAVE*, WOULDN'T YOU? BUT YOU'RE *AFRAID*...

AT FIRST I WAS *INSULTED*! BUT LATER ON, I *DID* SEE A *PSYCHIATRIST*...





**'I SPENT MANY HOURS WITH HIM, TELLING HIM ABOUT MYSELF! HE LISTENED... TAKING NOTES! ONE DAY, HE ANNOUNCED...'**

**MR.—! ACCORDING TO ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE TOLD ME, I AM FORCED TO COME THE CONCLUSION THAT YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM A MILD FORM OF DEMENTIA PRAECOX... ER... SCHIZOPHRENIA! YOUR PERIODS OF ELATION AND DEPRESSION SIGNIFY A SPLIT-PERSONALITY!**

**IS... IS IT DANGEROUS, DOCTOR!**

**THERAPY CAN DO A GREAT DEAL FOR YOU, MR.—! YOU MUST PUT YOURSELF IN MY HANDS!**

**YES, DOCTOR!**

**'SO I BEGAN VISITING MY PSYCHIATRIST REGULARLY! BUT, MEANWHILE, THESE SPELLS I'D BEEN EXPERIENCING BECAME MORE PRONOUNCED! I'D WAKE FROM SOUND SLEEPS WITH STRANGE DESIRES...'**

**'DURING THESE SPELLS, I'D VISIT PLACES I'D NEVER'VE DREAMED OF GOING DURING MY NORMAL PERIODS...'**

**'AT FIRST THERE WAS NO HARM IN WHAT I WAS DOING! BUT SOON THE THRILLS I'D SEEK DURING THESE SPELLS BECAME MORE PERVERSE...'**

**GOT TO... GO OUT!  
GOT TO... HAVE FUN!**

**WHAT'S A GUY LIKE YOU DOIN' IN A PLACE LIKE THIS, HANDSOME? YOU LOOK LIKE A GENTLEMAN!**

**JUS' OUT FOR A GOOD TIME, BABY!**

**THIS IS A STICK-UP, MISTER! PUT UP YOUR HANDS!**

**D... DON'T SHOOT! P-PLEASE!**

**'THE POINT IS... I DIDN'T NEED THE MONEY! I WAS WELL OFF. HAD A GOOD INCOME! WHAT I WAS DOING WAS PURELY EVIL FOR EVIL'S SAKE! I WAS LIKE TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE! IN MY NORMAL PERIODS, I WAS MORAL, DECENT, RESPECTABLE...'**

**'BUT IN THESE SPELLS, WHEN MY OTHER SIDE... MY EVIL SIDE... TOOK OVER, I WAS BLACK, DIRTY, THE WORST TYPE OF PERSON...'**

**YOU BUZZED, MR.—?**

**TAKE A LETTER, MISS JONES! TO A.C. BURTON CO.! GENTLEMEN! AS OF...**

**PLEASE... SOB!  
PLEASE DON'T...  
SOB... HIT ME AGAIN! P-PLEASE...**

**NEXT TIME...  
GASP... I'LL KILL YOU!**



'MEANWHILE, MY PSYCHIATRIST WAS DOING HIS BEST! I TOLD HIM ABOUT EACH OF THESE SORTIES INTO EVIL I'D EXPERIENCED ...'

YOU MUST REFUSE TO GIVE IN TO THESE TIDAL WAVES THAT SWEEP OVER YOU!

I CAN'T, DOCTOR! I'VE TRIED... BUT I JUST CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF!



'THESE FITS OF EVIL CAME MORE AND MORE OFTEN AS TIME WENT ON! THEY EVEN BEGAN TO HAPPEN DURING THE DAY... IN THE OFFICE...'

WHAT IS IT, HELEN? WHAT HAPPENED IN THERE?

SOB... SOB! HE BUZZED... SOB... FOR ME! I... I... SOB... SOB! HE... HE'S HORRIBLE! I... I NEVER WANT TO SEE HIM AGAIN!



'THINGS GOT WORSE! EACH TIME MY OTHER PERSONALITY TOOK OVER, I SUNK LOWER AND LOWER! ONCE, I WOKE UP IN A FILTHY CELLER! I DIDN'T KNOW HOW I'D GOTTEN THERE... WHAT HAD HAPPENED! MY CLOTHES WERE TORN AND DIRTY, AND I SMELLED FROM ALCOHOL AND CHEAP PERFUME! MY HEAD FELT LIKE ...'

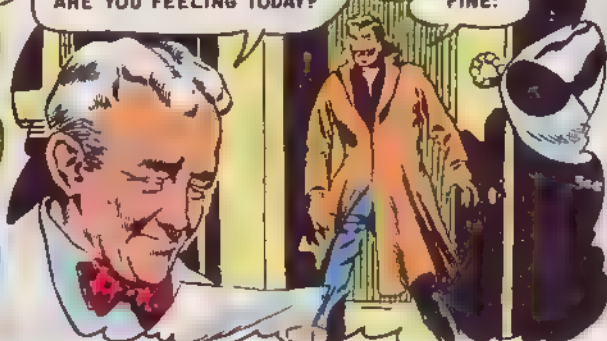


OOOOWW! I'VE GOT... A LUMP BACK THERE! I... I MUST HAVE BEEN SLUGGED! AND... AND MY WALLET'S GONE!

'AND THEN IT HAPPENED! I'D GONE TO VISIT MY PSYCHIATRIST AT OUR USUAL APPOINTMENT TIME! NO ONE WAS IN THE WAITING ROOM WHEN I CAME IN! HE DIDN'T EVEN LOOK UP...'

WELL... GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. —! COME IN! HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

I... I... FEEL FINE, DOCTOR! JUST... FINE!

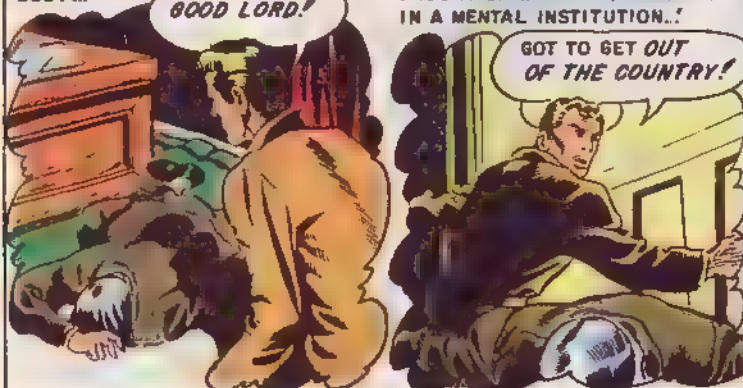


'I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED! ALL I KNOW IS THE NEXT THING I CAN RECALL IS STANDING OVER HIS MUTILATED BODY...'

GOOD LORD!

'I RAN FROM HIS OFFICE FEELING LOATHSOME AND DISGUSTED WITH MYSELF! THIS TIME I'D GONE TOO FAR! I KNEW, IF THEY CAUGHT UP WITH ME, I'D END UP IN A MENTAL INSTITUTION...'

GOT TO GET OUT OF THE COUNTRY!



'THAT NIGHT, I HOPPED A PLANE TO HAITI...'

I'LL STAY THERE TILL THIS THING BLOWS OVER!





IT WAS WHILE I WAS IN HAITI THAT I LEARNED ABOUT VODOO...

SIMPLE, CHUM! THESE NATIVE DEVILS FASHION A DOLL IN THE FORM OF SOMEONE THEY HATE! THEY MAKE SOME MUMBO-JUMBO... STICK A FEW PINS IN THE DOLL... AND POOF...THE GUY THEY HATE IS DEAD!

INCREDIBLE!

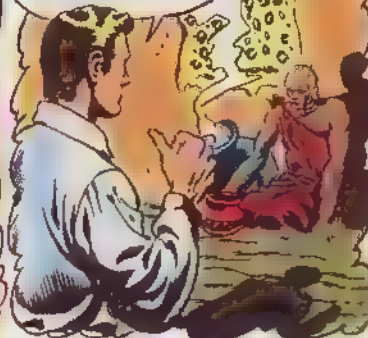
SO I WENT TO SEE AN OLD VODOO WITCH DOCTOR! I TRIED TO EXPLAIN WHAT I WANTED...

HALF OF ME IS EVIL!  
HALF IS GOOD!  
I WANT YOU TO DESTROY THE EVIL HALF!

NO! NO CAN DO!

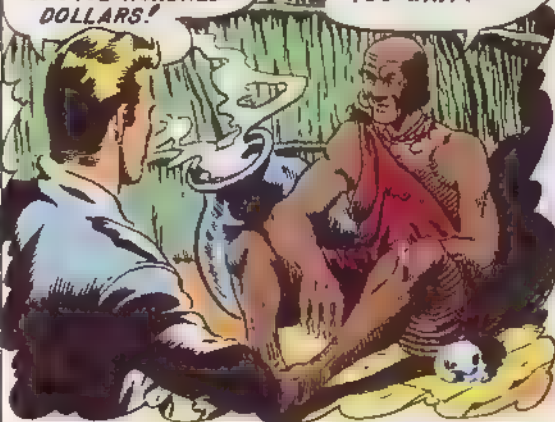
I'LL PAY!  
I'LL PAY ANYTHING YOU ASK! ANYTHING!

YOU PAY... TWO HUNDRED DOLLAR?



ANYTHING! I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS!

I TRY! YOU SIT DOWN! YOU WAIT!



THE OLD VODOO NATIVE BEGAN TO MOULD A SMALL GROTESQUE DOLL FROM WADS OF CLAY HE'D FISH FROM A BOILING POT! THEN HE TOOK CUTTINGS FROM MY HAIR... CLIPPINGS FROM MY NAILS... BITS OF MY SKIN... AND IMBEDDED THEM IN MY IMAGE! HE HELD IT UP FOR ME TO SEE...

THIS... YOU!

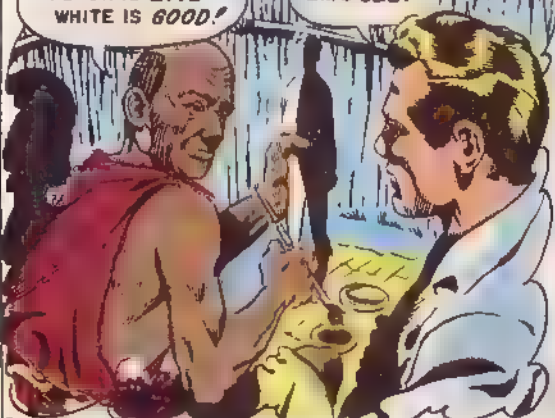
BY GEORGE, IT LOOKS LIKE ME!



NEXT, THE OLD MAN TOOK SOME BLACK GOO FROM A POT AND PAINTED ONE HALF OF THE DOLL BLACK! THE OTHER HALF, HE PAINTED PURE WHITE...

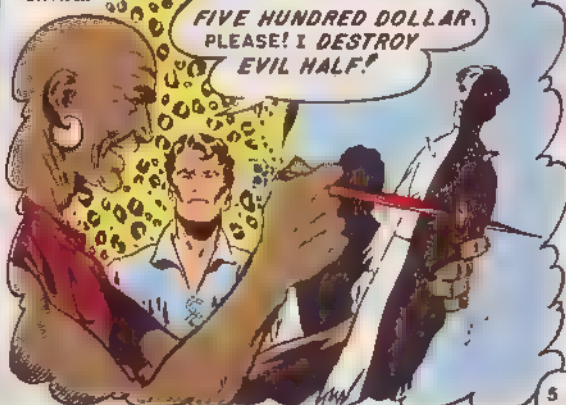
BLACK IS EVIL!  
WHITE IS GOOD!

I... I SEE!



SUDDENLY THE OLD MAN PICKED UP A LONG NEEDLE AND JABBED IT INTO THE BLACK HALF OF THE VODOO DOLL! HE GRINNED AT ME... AN IDIOTIC, TOOTHLESS GRIN...

FIVE HUNDRED DOLLAR, PLEASE! I DESTROY EVIL HALF!





YOU START FROM YOUR SEAT, ZACHARY BOXER! THE FORM ON THE DAYBED IS SITTING UP...



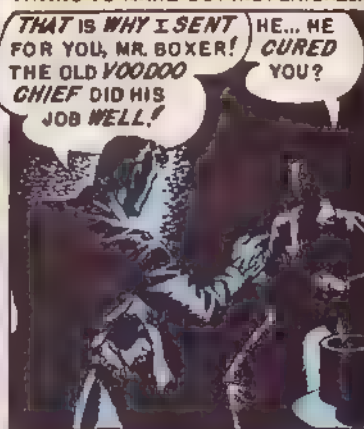
THAT'S MY STORY, MR. BOXER! NOW... YOU KNOW EVERYTHING!

I DON'T UNDER-  
STAND, SIR! WHY  
DO YOU SEND FOR  
ME? I'M AN  
**UNDER-  
TAKER!**



I KNOW,  
MR. BOXER!

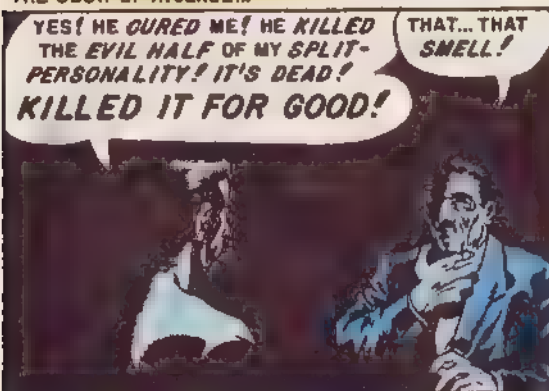
YOU WATCH AS THE FIGURE IN THE GLOOM BEGINS TO UNTIE HIS DRESSING GOWN! YOU STRAIN YOUR EYES, TRYING TO MAKE OUT HIS FEATURES...



THAT IS WHY I SENT  
FOR YOU, MR. BOXER!  
THE OLD VOODOO  
CHIEF DID HIS  
JOB WELL!

HE... HE  
CURED  
YOU?

THE FIGURE BEFORE YOU DROPS HIS ROBE TO THE FLOOR! A STRANGE ODOR DRIFTS TOWARD YOU ...NOT THE ODOR OF INCENSE...



YES! HE CURED ME! HE KILLED  
THE EVIL HALF OF MY SPLIT-  
PERSONALITY! IT'S DEAD!  
**KILLED IT FOR GOOD!**

THAT... THAT  
SMELL!

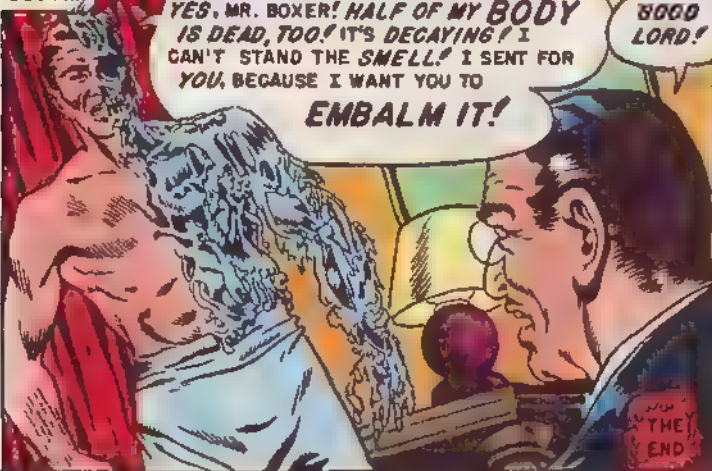
YOU KNOW THAT ODOR! IT'S FAMILIAR TO YOU, ZACHARY! BUT YOU CAN'T PLACE IT! THE INCENSE SCENT POLLUTES IT...



BUT SOON AFTER, A STRANGE  
THING BEGAN TO HAPPEN,  
MR. BOXER! THAT'S WHY I  
SENT FOR YOU...

TURN ON THE  
LIGHT! THIS  
HAS GONE FAR  
ENOUGH!

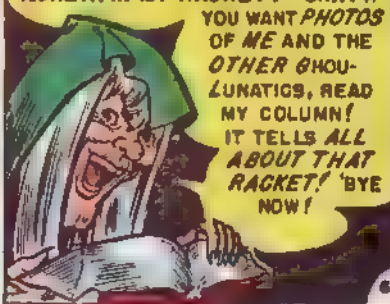
FOR A MOMENT, THE LIGHT BLINDS YOU! THEN YOU SEE HIM! HE STANDS BEFORE YOU CLOTHED ONLY IN SHORTS! AND HALF OF HIS BODY...



YES, MR. BOXER! HALF OF MY BODY  
IS DEAD, TOO! IT'S DECAYING! I  
CAN'T STAND THE SMELL! I SENT FOR  
YOU, BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO  
**EMBALM IT!**

GOOD  
LORD!

HEN, HEN! YEP! THAT'S MY STORY,  
DOLLS! POOR MR. 'BLANK' REALLY  
HAD A SPLIT-PERSONALITY...  
RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE OF HIM!  
THE OLD VOODOO CREEP TOOK  
HIM SERIOUS! AS FOR MR. BOXER...  
THAT'S THE FIRST HALF-WAY JOB HE  
EVER TACKLED! AS HE SNICKERS,  
'HALFA CORPSE IS BETTER THAN  
NONE... IN MY RACKET!' OH... IF



YOU WANT PHOTOS  
OF ME AND THE  
OTHER GHOU-  
LUNATICS, READ  
MY COLUMN!  
IT TELLS ALL  
ABOUT THAT  
RACKET! 'BYE  
NOW!

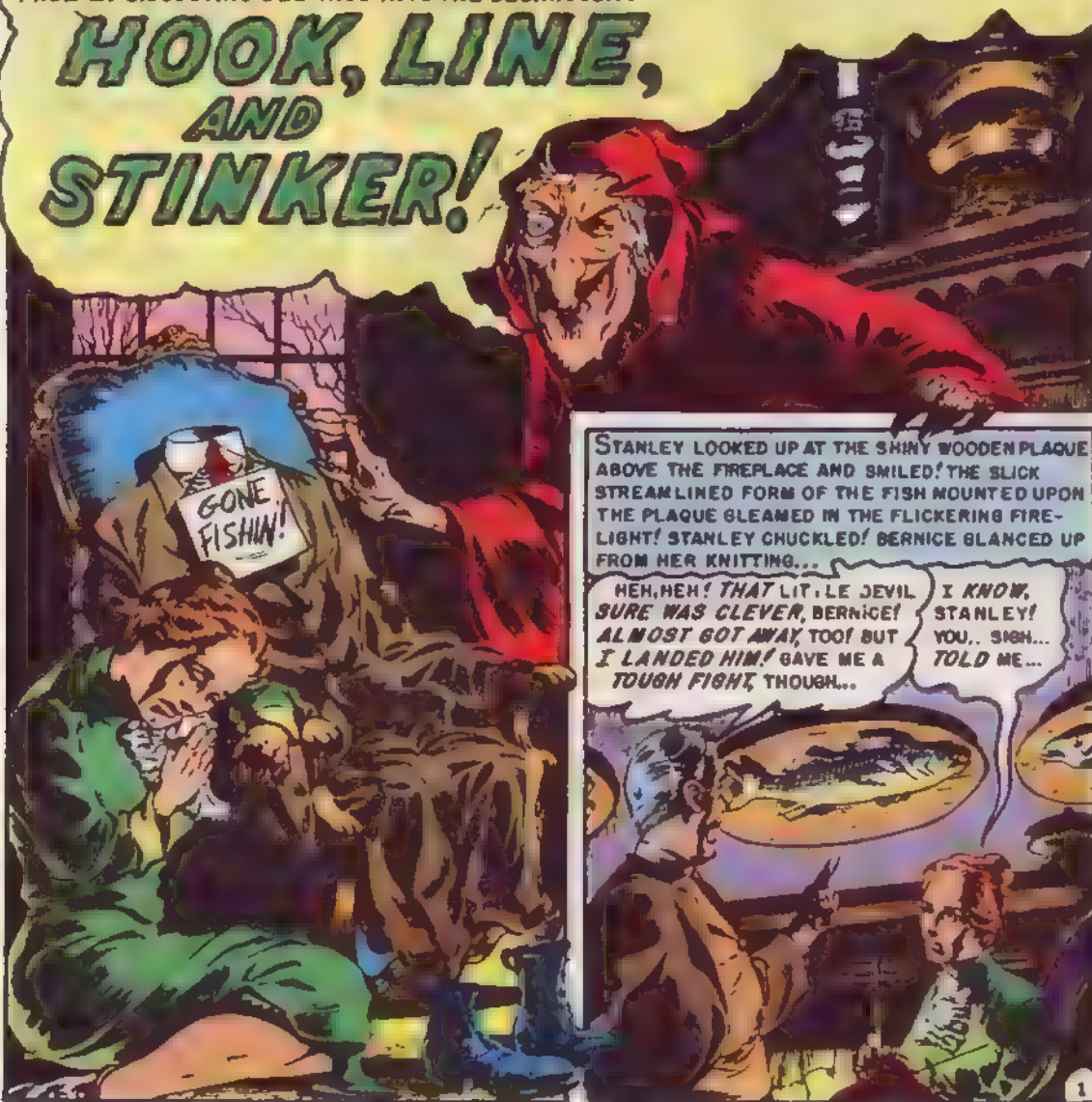
THEY  
END



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, KIDDIES! YEP... IT'S YOUR CREEPS-COOKER-UPPER, THE OLD WITCH! I'VE GOT THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON LIT, AND ITS EVIL BREW IS BUBBLING AND STEAMING! COME ON IN! WE'LL HAVE A REGULAR OLD-FASHIONED FISH-FRY! YEP! MY STORY THIS TIME CONCERNS FISH... POOR FISH THAT GET CAUGHT! I CALL THIS PORTION OF PUTRID PALPITATIONS DISHED FROM MY DISGUSTING DELVINGS INTO THE DELIRIOUS...

## HOOK, LINE, AND STINKER!



STANLEY LOOKED UP AT THE SHINY WOODEN PLAQUE ABOVE THE FIREPLACE AND SMILED! THE SLICK STREAMLINED FORM OF THE FISH MOUNTED UPON THE PLAQUE GLEAMED IN THE FLICKERING FIRE-LIGHT! STANLEY CHUCKLED! BERNICE GLANCED UP FROM HER KNITTING...

HEH, HEH! THAT LITTLE DEVIL SURE WAS CLEVER, BERNICE! ALMOST GOT AWAY, TOO! BUT I LANDED HIM! GAVE ME A TOUGH FIGHT, THOUGH...

I KNOW, STANLEY! YOU... SIGH... TOLD ME...





STANLEY TURNED FROM THE MOUNTED FISH AND STUDIED THE FACE OF THE FORTY-YEAR OLD WOMAN SEATED BEFORE HIM...

S'MATTER, BERNICE? YOU ANGRY 'BOUT SOMETHIN'?

NO, STANLEY! I...I... SOB... I'M NOT ANGRY!

STANLEY PATTED THE UNHAPPY WOMAN'S HEAVING SHOULDER...

AW, BERNICE! DON'T START THAT ALL OVER AGAIN!

BUT... SOB, I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! FIFTEEN YEARS!

IT WON'T BE LONG NOW, BERNICE! YOU'LL SEE!

YOU... SAY THAT EVERY YEAR, STANLEY! I'M TIRED OF WAITING! WE'RE GETTING OLD!

BUT... I'M NOT READY TO GET MARRIED YET, BERNICE!

WHEN, STANLEY? WHEN WILL YOU BE READY? WE'VE BEEN KEEPING COMPANY FOR ALMOST FIFTEEN YEARS! YOU'RE AS READY AS YOU'LL EVER BE!

GIVE ME A FEW MORE MONTHS! THAT'S ALL I ASK!

WE LOVE EACH OTHER, STANLEY! I'M LONELY HERE IN THIS OLD HOUSE ALL BY MYSELF...

I COME TO SEE YOU EVERY DAY, DON'T I? I EAT SUPPER HERE! I COME OVER FOR BREAKFAST, TOO! WHAT MORE CAN I DO?

YOU CAN LIVE HERE! IF WE WERE MARRIED, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO HOME AT NIGHT!

HOME? OH, DEAR! THANK YOU FOR REMINDING ME! IT'S PAST ELEVEN! I MUST BE GOING! TOMORROW'S SATURDAY, YOU KNOW!

I... I KNOW! GOING ON A FISHING TRIP AGAIN, EH, STANLEY?



THAT'S RIGHT!  
HOPE I CATCH A  
**BIG ONE!** GEE,  
IT'S **NICE** OF YOU  
TO TAKE CARE OF  
MY **TROPHIES**  
FOR ME, BERNICE!

THIS WILL BE  
**YOUR HOME**  
SOMEDAY!  
MIGHT AS  
WELL...

GOOD-NIGHT,  
BERNICE!  
SEE YOU  
MONDAY!

GOOD-NIGHT,  
STANLEY!

HEE, HEE! POOR BERNICE! FOR **FIF-TEEN YEARS**, SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR STANLEY TO **POP THE QUESTION!** FOR FIFTEEN YEARS HE'S BEEN COMING OVER **EVERY NIGHT...** EATING SUPPER...SITTING TILL ELEVEN...THEN GOING **BACK** TO HIS **LITTLE FURNISHED ROOM!** USED TO BE BERNICE WOULD LOOK **FORWARD** TO THE **WEEK ENDS...** WHEN THEY COULD BE TOGETHER **ALL DAY!** THEY'D GO ON **PICNICS...LONG WALKS...** TO THE **MOVIES!** BUT **LATELY**, STANLEY'D DISCOVERED...  
**FISHING...**

BERNICE CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND STANLEY AND LOCKED IT! THEN SHE TURNED TO THE PLAQUES HANGING AROUND THE LIVING-ROOM...PLAQUES WITH FISH MOUNTED UPON THEM...

I...I **HATE** YOU! EACH **ONE** OF YOU!  
I **HATE** YOU FOR TAKING HIM  
AWAY FROM ME!

EVERY TIME STANLEY WOULD GO ON A FISHING TRIP, HE'D BRING HOME A MOUNTED TROPHY! AND HE'D BE SO PROUD...

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE **FIGHT** HE PUT UP, BERNICE! TOOK ME **HALF AN HOUR** TO **LAND 'IM!** **ALMOST GOT AWAY, TOO!** ISN'T HE A **BEAUTY?**

LOVELY...  
CHOKED!  
STANLEY!

BERNICE DESPISED THE MOUNTED FISH STANLEY WOULD BRING! BUT WHAT COULD SHE **DO?** HE LIVED IN A SMALL FURNISHED ROOM! HE **COULDN'T** KEEP THEM **THERE...**

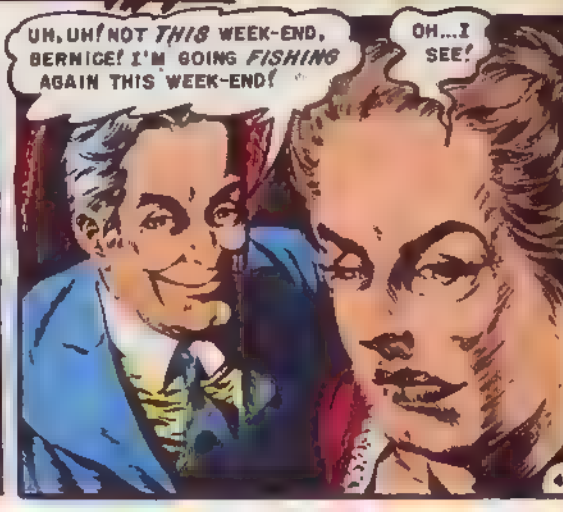
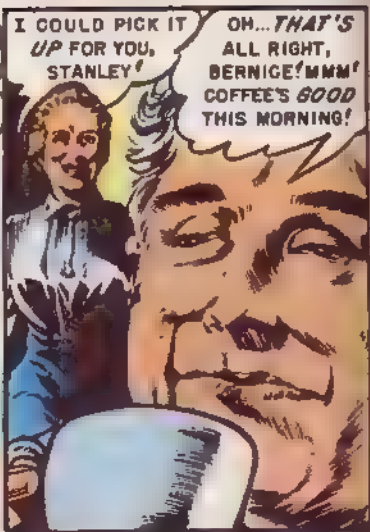
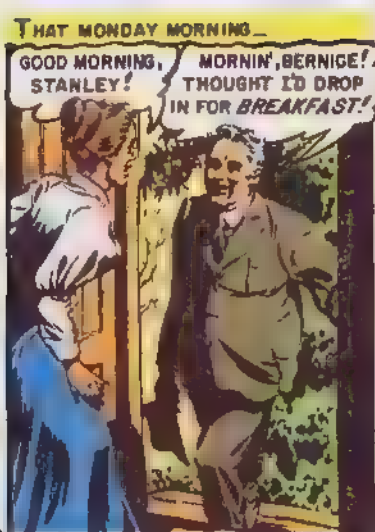
MRS. FLINTPEACH, MY LAND-  
LADY, WOULD **BLOW A FUSE**  
IF I HUNG THEM ON HER  
**WALL, BERNICE!**

OH, I DON'T MIND  
**KEEPING** THEM FOR  
YOU, STANLEY! AFTER  
**ALL...** YOU WILL BE  
LIVING **HERE** WHEN  
WE'RE...WHEN WE'RE...

BERNICE TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS AND TIP-TOED UPSTAIRS TO HER LONELY BED! SHE SIGNED AS SHE GREPT BENEATH THE GOLD SHEETS...

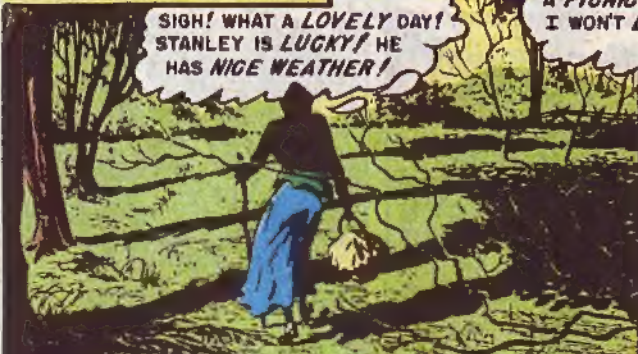
OH, DEAR! I WONDER WHAT I'LL  
DO TOMORROW! WEEK ENDS ARE  
SO LONELY NOW...NOW THAT  
STANLEY GOES...SOB...FISHING...  
SOB...







THAT SATURDAY, BERNICE PUT ON HER WALKING SHOES AND SET OFF FOR HER USUAL COUNTRY STROLL! EVER SINCE STANLEY'D TAKEN TO GOING FISHING ON WEEK-ENDS, BERNICE'D STARTED HIKING INTO THE WOODS AND FIELDS OUTSIDE OF TOWN TO PASS THE TIME...

Bernice is walking away from the viewer through a grassy field with trees in the background. She is wearing a green jacket and blue trousers, and is carrying a basket.

SIGH! WHAT A LOVELY DAY! STANLEY IS LUCKY! HE HAS NICE WEATHER!

SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE ENJOYING A PICNIC OVER THERE! WELL, I WON'T DISTURB THEM! I'LL JUST...

GIGGLE... GIGGLE! THAT'S ENOUGH, YOU...YOU

OH... JUST ONE MORE, EMMA!

BERNICE'S BLOOD FROZE IN HER VEINS! SHE STIFFENED! THE MAN'S VOICE! THE MAN SOUNDED LIKE...

GASP... STANLEY!

A FAINT BREEZE STIRRED LAZILY ACROSS THE FIELD CARRYING THE SMELL OF NEW-MOWN HAY WITH IT! BERNICE LISTENED...

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO MARRY ME, STANLEY DEAR?

SOON, EMMA! VERY SOON, NOW!

BERNICE EDGED CLOSER! SHE COULDN'T BELIEVE HER EARS...

DID YOU TELL HER YET, STANLEY? DID YOU TELL HER ABOUT US?

NOT YET, HONEY! I WILL!

WHERE DO YOU TELL HER YOU GO ON WEEK-ENDS, STANLEY?

I TELL HER I GO FISHING!

GIGGLE! AND SHE BELIEVES YOU?

OF COURSE! I BRING HER A MOUNTED FISH... AS PROOF! AND I TELL HER HOW I CAUGHT IT! OF COURSE SHE BELIEVES ME!



BERNICE HAD TO COVER HER MOUTH  
TO KEEP FROM SCREAMING! SHE  
TURNED TO RUN AS...

BUT LET'S NOT TALK  
ABOUT HER, EMMA,  
DEAR! THE WEEK-  
END'S ALMOST HALF  
OVER! LET'S NOT  
WASTE ANY OF ITS  
PRECIOUS MOMENTS!

OH,  
STANLEY!  
YOU'RE  
SO  
SWEET...

BERNICE SCRAMBLED ACROSS THE  
FIELD AND THROUGH THE WOODS...

STANLEY...AND ANOTHER  
WOMAN! HE LIED TO ME!  
HE...HE TOLD ME HE WAS  
FISHING, AND ALL THE  
TIME HE WAS SEEING HER!

SHE ARRIVED HOME BRUISED AND  
TORN...GASPING FOR BREATH...

WHAT WILL I DO? I'M  
LOSING HIM!  
LOSING HIM!



BERNICE SPENT THE REST OF THE WEEK-END CRYING  
HER HEART OUT! SHE KEPT THINKING OF STANLEY...  
AND THAT WOMAN...

...AND...SOB...I...SUPPOSE...  
SOB...HE'LL BRING ME...  
ANOTHER MOUNTED...FISH...  
TO...SOB...HANG...UP...WITH...  
SOB...THE REST...OF THEM...

AND BERNICE WAS RIGHT! ON MONDAY NIGHT...

GOOD EVENING, BERNICE!  
LOOK!

GOOD EVENING,  
STANLEY! COME...  
COME IN...



LOOK AT THIS ONE! ONE OF THE  
BOYS UP AT THE LAKE TOLD ME  
IT WAS THE BIGGEST RAINBOW  
HE'D EVER SEEN COME OUT OF  
THOSE WATERS...

WHAT LAKE,  
STANLEY?

LAKE CHIPPAWA, WHERE  
I ALWAYS GO! HAD THIS  
BABY GOIN' FOR ALMOST  
AN HOUR...

YOU'VE HAD ME GOING  
TOO, STANLEY! FOR  
A LONG TIME...





HUH? YOU SAY  
SOMETHIN'!

I...I...NO,  
STANLEY!

OH! WELL! WHERE WAS  
I? OH, YEAH! ALMOST AN  
HOUR THIS RAINBOW  
FOUGHT... BUT I  
FINALLY LANDED  
HIM!

FIFTEEN  
YEARS  
YOU'VE  
BEEN  
FIGHTING  
ME!

NOW, HE'S MINE!  
ALL MINE! I...I...  
**BERNICE!**

NOW  
YOU'RE  
GOING TO  
BE MINE...  
STANLEY!

**BERNICE! FOR  
GOD'S SAKE!  
PUT DOWN  
THAT KNIFE!**

I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR  
'FISHING' TRIPS, STANLEY...  
ALL ABOUT THAT EMMA...

...BUT SHE CAN'T HAVE  
YOU! YOU'RE MINE! I  
**HOOKED YOU  
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO...  
AND I'M GOING TO  
LAND YOU!**

**BERNICE!**

WHEN BERNICE'S MAID CAME THE NEXT MORNING, SHE FOUND THE MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN STANDING BEFORE A HUGE PLAQUE HANGING ABOVE THE FIRE-PLACE! THE EARLY MORNING LIGHT GLEAMED ON THE BLOOD-STAINED FIGURE MOUNTED UPON IT! BERNICE'S VOICE WAS SLIGHTLY HIGH-PITCHED AND SHAKY AS SHE CHUCKLED...

EEE, EEE! HE WAS A CLEVER LITTLE  
DEVIL! ALMOST GOT AWAY, TOO! BUT I  
LANDED HIM! EEE, EEE! GAVE ME A  
TOUGH FIGHT, THOUGH! EEE, EEE!  
FIFTEEN... EEE, EEE... YEARS...

HEE, HEE! YEP! POOR STANLEY WAS  
FINALLY CAUGHT! AS FOR BERNICE...  
WELL, THEY PUT HER AWAY IN A  
PADDED CELL! ALL DAY LONG SHE  
JUST SITS... AND SITS... AND SITS!  
BUT NOTHING BITES ON THE HAIR-  
PIN SHE DANGLES DOWN THE SINK  
DRAIN! I GUESS STANLEY WILL

BE THE ONLY  
POOR FISH  
SHE EVER  
HOOKED!  
'BYE, NOW!  
WE'LL ALL  
SEE YOU NEXT  
IN MY MAD-HAG,  
THE HAUNT  
OF FEAR!

-THE END-





# THE VAULT KEEPER